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SONGS OF A FACTORY GIRL

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ETHEL CARNIE



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SONGS OF A FACTORY GIRL



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SONGS
OF A
FACTORY GIRL

BY
ETHEL CARNIE

LONDON
HEADLEY BROTHERS
BISHOPSGATE

First edition, April, 1911.

Second edition, August, 1911

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To
My Mother

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FOREWORD.

YOU who have clasped Life close, and known
How great it be, despite of wrong ;
The cark of care, the pang of pain,
I greet you with this Book of Song.

You who have held Love fast, and known
How fair, although to fall ere long,
As drift rain-beaten blossoms down,
I kiss you with this Book of Song.

You who have fighting failed, yet known
Victory was certain, soon or long ;
The heart unquelled, the conqueror's heart,
I hail you with this book of Song.

You who have gripped Death hard, and known
Till choked with mist, the sun shone strong
On woods and lives unfolding fair—
I speak you with this passing Song.

ETHEL CARNIE.

Great Harwood,
February 19th, 1911.

SONGS OF A FACTORY GIRL

LIFE AND SONG.

MY soul hears melody in many things—
For this I thank the gods each hour I live.
Should Sorrow shade each joy with brooding wings
All through my life, whilst Fate to me shall give
An ear to list the song that Nature old
Has chanted through the ages, I shall say,
Though friends desert, and Time turns all the gold
Of love to grey, that it is sweet to stay.

Yea, clinging to the skirts of Mistress Life,
Methinks, a child, I'd hide my face from Death,
Crying, "Whilst woods with birds and flowers
are rife,
And all the air is rapturous with the breath
Of summer younglings, let me stay ; but come
When trees are leafless, and the air is chill,
And the thick ice has muted and turned dumb
The stream that played beneath the windy hill.'

Yet, even in the winter, song lives on,
The crackling faggots play a merry tune,
The sparks count time, and cheerily anon
The cricket doth accompany. Rich June

Has left her ghosts of trembling ferns and flowers
 Upon the pane, and glistening in the light
 Of rosy fire that dares the cold's worst power,
 They bring us many a dream of past delight.

And the vast ocean, lashed to creamy foam,
 Tossing to heaven rebellious founts of spray,
 Rages and boils, whilst the wild seagulls' scream
 Rings wierdly up into the dome of grey :
 This, too, is music—of a grander note—
 Not the sweet bubble of a lullaby
 From rosy wave-nymphs, but the brazen throat
 Of Tempest roaring out that men must die.

O Life, for me so full of leaf and bud—
 A harp wreathed round with roses, with the dew
 Of purest hopes besprent—Life, with thy woods
 Sweet with the bursting of the violets blue,
 I pray thee, should my spirit's ears grow dull
 In age, O ! let me singing, laughing go
 In leafy summer, when the air is full
 Of mellow breathings, and the roses blow.

AN OLD WOMAN'S HANDS.

HANDS, I would kiss you passionate and fond.
 Lay on the withered brown my youthful lips
 In adoration ! or would paint them so,
 Shaking and old, with the worn ring that slips

Forward on the thin finger ; men have limned
Subjects less noble with a world of care.
What tasks you have performed with patient skill
Since the dear days when you were young and
fair
And fluttering in a lover's tender clasp
Like wild birds caught ! You have lain cool as
eve
On aching, fevered brows ; and cradles swung
To melodies that grown men cherish still,
Somewhere in the wild world, no longer young ;
And with what pleasant haste washed the best
cups
When some old neighbour called to take her tea
Within a spotless room, and you have dodged
Old bonnets up like new ones—merrily !
To me you are more sweet than softer ones
Trembling o'er letters full of Love and Spring
And life untried—dear, shaking, year-creased
hands
Where shines the almost breaking wedding-ring !
A few more tasks are left you to perform,
A wee, wee trembling more—then long, sweet rest,
And couched on lace and satin you will lie,
Your history folded on the quiet breast.
But we shall sigh to think you did not hold
The flowers of life before we crossed them so ;
You should have had more roses years ago,
'Tis late to give them when you will not know.

LOVE AND POVERTY.

GO by me, Love, with roses crowned,
 And ardent eyes with pleading wet ;
 Thou art not made for such as I—
 Pass on ! I cannot dare it yet ;
 Should baby lips cry out for bread,
 And silent wifely look of woe
 Burn to my soul, I'd hate thee, Love,
 Who wooest me to't—so, turn and go.

If I must suffer, let me walk
 Through Life alone, nor pass the cup
 To other mouths as yet un-kissed—
 And sometimes in the dark, look up
 With ecstasy about my heart,
 That, by the path of thorn and stone
 I drew no other tender feet—
 But walked without thee—and alone !

Nay, plead no more ; thy subtle words
 Of fire and dew are battering down
 The walls I raised around my heart,
 As warriors sack a weak, worn town.
 Draw near, dear Love, to Palace gates
 Where almond blossoms rosy rain
 On marble pavements, and the spray
 Of silver fountains falls again.

Or, if thou finds no entrance there,
Go further still until thou find
Some dwellers neither rich nor poor,
And cheerfully reposed in mind ;
And some day, Love, come back again,
With blossomed chaplet, lashes wet,
When Poverty is not a crime—
And I am thine—do not forget.

WONDERMENT.

TO me 'twill ever be a wondrous thing
That lilies creamy come, and roses red ;
That there are mossy carpets for our feet,
And starlit skies o'erhead,
And princely rivers that eternal flow ;
Wild mountain ravines where the cold white snow
By years unmelted thrones the gentian blue,
Which in its heart receives pellucid dew.

Each tiny leaf that opens to the morn,
Each waxen star of elderberry white,
And every wandering wind doth send my heart
Into a sweet delight :
Nor all the books of old philosophy
Can ever still that wonderment in me ;
Nor all the works of science ever writ
Explain to me the heavens with vast suns lit.

Oh, let me ever wonder whilst I live,
 Like a fair child whose mind for ever grows :
 Who ever questions plies, and views with awe
 The rain-drop in a rose ;
 For those who have that charm can ne'er grow old,
 And dreams about their souls shall ever fold.
 Who steps aside lest back into the sod
 He crush a violet, closely lives with God.

CLOUD MOUNTAINS.

COULD we but climb those cloud-slopes, you
 and I,
 Of pearl and opal tints flung 'gainst the sky
 When dove-eyed evening whispers in the grove—
 We'd never wander back, but live and love
 Far from this world with spirit grown so cold,
 Methinks 'twould even sell the bars of gold
 Warm sunset gives us, and the stars below
 So brightly glimmering. Lightly would we go,
 Until we rested in a pleasant hollow
 'Twixt virgin hills ; from ledge to ledge I'd follow
 Your daring footsteps, till upon our ears
 There smote no echo from this world of tears.
 Then would we sit together whilst the stars
 Wheeled swift around us like to crystal cars ;
 And when Night flung her veil o'er each white peak,
 Sleep soft together, leaning cheek on cheek,
 The peddling earth a speck beneath our feet—
 And live a fuller life, more fair and sweet.

IF I FORGET.

IF I forget the souls in the Abyss,
Whom our gold-greedy world has sold to Lust,
May my own soul ne'er leap to Love's pure kiss,
But trail its broken pinions through the dust,
If I forget !

O souls shut out in utter starless gloom,
Hated, and scorned, and starved—if I forget,
Let there fall down on me eternal doom,
My eyes for ever weep, and still be wet,
If I forget !

MOTHERHOOD.

THERE break the strong, tumultuous waves of
pain,
Thundering with awful sound along the strand,
Through which the distant sky looks ashen pale,
And floats no whisper from the lovely land
Where corn is springing green beneath the sun,
Where the sweet spray is bent by some glad bird,
Where white moons peep through aisles of plumèd
woods,
And rain-drops, pattering hail, earth's songs are
heard.
Down, down, as goes the diver through the flood,
Where unknown horrors through the waters creep,

Alone, for none may follow if they would,
 Leaving the world with one adventurous leap—
 Then up and up, flung back upon the shore,
 Clasp the precious cup of life's pure gold—
 Forgetting, as the sunlight makes it blaze,
 The weird, black tides, that o'er the diver rolled.

THE MOTHER.

I AM tired, yet I pass not to rest ;
 I am weak, yet my love makes me strong ;
 And you never would weariness guess,
 As I croon my last darling a song.

Such a queer little song of the moon,
 And her pranks in the realms of the skies,
 That I learnt in my own mother's lap—
 And he looks with his big, wondering eyes.

When I open the door to the sun
 I can catch the low hum of the street,
 Where the gay girls unmarried, go by,
 With their laughter so careless and sweet.

I have only one dress that is fair,
 And I stay in my bare little room,
 But the glint of my last darling's hair
 Lights the place like the golden of broom.

All my ribbons have gone for his sleeves,
 That I wore in light days long ago !

But the little blue beads on his neck
Are like gentian flowers up in the snow !

I would climb the steep path up the hill,
I would lie where the heather is blue,
But the warm, wee hands pull at my skirts—
And so what is a woman to do ?

I will wait till his feet have grown strong,
For the bleak, ragged, beautiful moor—
I will sit in my little grey room
Till my darling can run through the door.

Then together we'll climb the hill-path
With the stones rolling down the sheer steep
And I'll watch the light leap in his eyes
As a ship o'er the rim of the deep.

I will say, " Little boy, this is Life !
From the sod to the far, boundless blue !
'Tis a sweet and a brave, (little boy),
And a great world I've given you to."

A TIRED MOTHER.

HUSH, prattling younglings, wake her not awhile !
The hueless day has left its trace behind—
Her lips are softened in a tired smile ;
In some sweet spot doth roam her happy mind,
For a few moments from its cares set free
And breathing the soft airs of liberty.

Her foot that went the weary household round
 Dances with lightsome trip some smooth green
 lawn,

Her eyes, that some new duty ever found
 Waiting close by—to fairer sights are drawn,
 Roses that shower pink snows through golden air,
 And bowers of greenery stretching far and fair.

The lines of care engraven round her mouth
 Relax and fainter grow ; the toil-worn hands
 Fall in her lap—some charm-wind from the south
 Enchains her soul with fragrant flowery bands.
 Her cheeks take on the soft and peachy glow
 That lured the first kiss years and years ago.

And she will wake and cradle you to rest
 With merry patience—sing sweet lullabies,
 And soft as down will pillow you her breast,
 And down upon you beam her love-lit eyes ;
 But let her sleep this little while, and bring
 Back from her dreams a heart aglow with spring.

A GREEK BOY.

(SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE).

A TAWNY hide hangs o'er the shoulders fine ;
 Dark, daring eyes, smile out most luringly ;
 Curly, where the sun-gleams linger, loving cling
 Thick round a spacious brow. By the blue sea
 Thousands of years ago he roamed ; what joy
 To have kept step with him along the shore ;

Tended on some green turf with him the flock
Soft-bleating—in our ears the ocean's roar !
That hand, methinks, would ply the oar with ease,
The cheek has that warm tint burnt by the sun ;
No maidish youth was he in love or sports,
Swifter than Mercury's his feet could run :
Beauty, but 'tis the rock-born eagle's grace.
The witchery of this face appeals to me,
Over the tide of years that soundless flow
Because this soul would die for liberty.

AN ETCHING.

WITHIN my mind a faint grey seascape grows,
And I must paint it—bring from out the
brain
Its shadowy outlines, make it fast with words,
Or it will flee and never come again.
A West wind blows. Out on the distant tide
A few white sails gleam silvery in the sun ;
Deep purple is the sea at furthest rim,
Whilst on the lower sands the waves break dun.
High, dry on shingly beach the boats are pulled,
Waiting till sturdy fishers row far out
Under the midnight stars, whilst dear ones wait
Their safe return with many an ache of doubt.
How still, how tranquil, is the quaint, small town !
Its windmill's sails go slowly round and round ;
The little houses bathed in sunshine stand,
And flowers blow in plots of garden ground.

Nothing is heard but cry of wandering bird,
 And buzz of turning sails blown by the wind.
 The morning stirs with its light breath grey grass
 Close to the sea, which oft the billows find.

A WINTER'S SCENE.

A WHITE world, with a spectral sun that hangs
 In ash-grey sky—the leafless trees are full
 Of soft, pure balls that one could almost think,
 (So fair and white they are) were fairy wool.
 The ugly houses wear a bridal look,
 And gardens all are snugly covered up ;
 But underneath that cloak what charms are hid !
 Purple and gold in many a fragrant cup.
 The speckled throstle picks amongst the snow
 For crumbs that may be hidden—folds his wing,
 And shivers as he looks with hungry eye,
 And yearns to hear the step of laughing Spring.

THE WORLD.

THINKING of places sweet and green beneath
 the spreading sky
 I almost breathe the pagan prayer that I might
 never die.
 Looking upon the rising sun I wish to watch him
 rise for aye,
 And night is fair with candle-light, and all the music
 of the day.

But thinking if my prayer was heard, lengthened
my mortal years,
Why, if the smiles were multiplied, so also were the
tears,
And spots most beautiful would seem like grave-
yards dank and drear.
If we must move 'midst faces strange that knew
us not in yester year.

The trees are fair because we sat under their boughs
in summer heat,
And there is more than mortal charm that makes
us love this window seat,
For here we watched the harvest moon scud from
beneath a bank of cloud
And by its light each other saw, and felt the heart
beat fast and loud.

When they are gone we loved so well, like aliens
roam we through the earth,
And jangled out of harmony are all familiar sounds
of mirth ;
The spell that binds us to the earth is snapped
asunder—let us go !
For not for us the sun, moon, and stars—nor
moorland breezes glorious blow.

THE UNIVERSAL LIFE.

WIDE open stands the door of my soul
 And the world's men and women troop
 through ;
 Some weeping, some laughing, some dumb with
 despair,
 Wearing roses, and fennel, and rue ;
 And the beat of their feet makes a martial refrain—
 Come in, I am waiting for you.

Wide open stands the door of my soul,
 And the victor and vanquished tramp in ;
 Come the makers of music immortal and sweet,
 Come the stirrers of conflict and din ;
 And their voices sound loud as the roar of the sea—
 O voices, I bid you come in.

Wide open stands the door of my soul,
 And the noble, the brave, the soul-freed
 Come wearing the palm that they won with their
 pain,
 Come the puny souls fettered with greed ;
 And I greet with my best love the soul of the serf,
 Which the valiant and pure cannot need.

Wide open stands the door of my soul,
 And the lover and loved one stand there.
 I am glad that the lover is tender and true,
 That the loved one is blooming and fair ;

But the best place I keep for the soul that waits
lone,
As one tree in the forest stands bare.

Wide open stands the door of my soul,
Comes the mother, soft hushing her child ;
Babbling stories unnumbered of baby tricks done,
Of the times it has whimpered or smiled—
But I lock my arms close round the great mother-
soul,
Empty-bosomed, with eyes yearning wild.

I cannot shut the door of my soul ;
Through the day and the night they pour
through.

O women and men, I can ne'er sit alone,
For my fate is all mixed up with you :
I must laugh to the end with the young and the
gay—
I must sigh with the wearers of rue.

LOVE'S GARDEN.

SOMEWHERE, or East or West it lies,
A garden beautiful to see ;
Somewhere beneath the wide-furled skies
Its rich flowers bloom perpetually,
Carnations redder than heart-blood,
The lily with her fair, white hood,

And scented things that have no name,
With tulips leaping into flame.

A tree stands in one corner sweet
Wherein a magic bird doth sing,
Whilst to the rhythm of bright feet
A sunlit fountain swift doth spring.
Who opes the gate and enters there
Must ever nurse a fragrant care ;
Nor ever more can wander free
By lake and river, glade and sea.

Yet, say the chroniclers of old,
Thousands for entrance search and sigh ;
Their liberty seems bleak and cold,
They offer it these sweets to buy.
Then once within some fain would out,
But blunder on in paths of doubt—
If they escape 'tis but to find
They left the merry heart behind.

Somewhere, or North or South it lies,
And casts its fragrance on the breeze ;
Violets more dark than houris' eyes
Grow in the shadow of its trees.
Some find it early, others late,
Some are misled by taunting fate,
But ever, always night and day,
Pilgrims to find it make their way.

FRIENDSHIP.

ASK thee not to share, O friend, with me
 Thy sun, thy roses, youth's wild ecstasy ;
 But should thy heart grow tired in future years,
 Beneath a carking load of grief and fears,
 Come then, and I will sit and weep with thee.

I ask thee not to come when skies are fair,
 Nor shed for me one joy-leaf from thy hair ;
 But when the flowers are broken by the blast,
 The lilies rotting, roses fading fast,
 Remember that I wait thy woe to share.

Sit in my heart and shelter from the rain !
 Then when the sky blows blue and fair again
 I'll let thee flutter out from me once more,
 With gladness piercing to my heart's deep core,
 That I was blessed to soothe thee in thy pain.

For Friendship keeps—locked in her limpid eyes—
 Eternal sunbeams, never-changing skies ;
 And loves us for our frailties as our worth :
 And from the very moment of her birth
 Grows strong though feeding but on Sorrow's sighs.

JUNE.

WITH dress of forest green, and wreath both
 white and red,
 I saw her dance along the ways and pipe a merry
 tune ;

28 Songs of a Factory Girl.

Her lips, that were more soft and sweet than roses
on her head,
Were pressed close to a fresh-plucked reed, and
sang the song of June.

She waved her wondrous wand, and earth turned
blue and gold,
This middle daughter of the year, and fairest of
them all,
Who brings the reign of roses full, the bird songs
new and old,
The sigh of leaves in whose green courts the
summer birds loud call.

How kind to wanderers lone who sleep beneath the
stars !
Their wayside couch is sudden turned to that
might hold a king ;
The soft grass makes a pillow cool—nothing there
is that mars—
And through their dreams there comes a sense
of full leaves murmuring.

No longer does their plight seem beggarly and
drear ;
The big white stars their candles are, and green
curtains round are drawn ;
The wide earth is their dream-chamber, and
music sweetly clear,
The birds sing in the boughs of June to tell them
it is dawn.

SWEETS.

A BLOW of summer roses in the hedge,
Some pink, some purely white ;
And through the green below, a chuckling brook
Reflects the sunny light.

Two maidens telling secrets in the dusk,
And vowing friendship long ;
And o'er the floor the fire flings blood-red light,
Whilst ghostly shadows throng.

A mother seated in the meadow grass
A laughing child beside,
Both weaving daisy-chains, whilst overhead
The milk-white cloudlets ride.

Two lovers whispering tales of deathless love
In a still, twilit lane ;
To live, they say, with bright and faithful eyes,
Through time, and grief, and pain.

O sweets that come and go like gracious doves
In the fair summer time,
We hold ye in the memory of our hearts
Untouched by winter's rime !

When whistling winds lament o'er woodlands bare,
And gardens heaped with snow,
The happy mind can see in dreamy mood
A million roses blow.

THE CIRCLE.

AROUND the hearth-stone of the heart
There is not room for all the world :
Some cherished few sit closely drawn,
Warmed at Love's fire when storms are hurled.
We make the circle wider yet
For passing guest right merrily,
But when the doors behind him close
The circle still is two or three.

Sometimes, aflush with youth and hope,
Upon the wings of strong delight
We strive to take the whole world in,
But fail ere we have done it quite.
The elfin moment will not stay,
Upon the spirit shuts the stone,
Leaving the world outside once more—
We with our loved ones sit alone.

The heart is small, the world is wide,
And so within the human breast
Some little spot where we were bred,
Or north, or south, or east, or west,
Around our roots yet hangs its soil ;
And when we cross Death's chiller foam
Methinks the sweetest thing were this—
An angel with a face from home.

EARTH'S SONG TO HER CHILDREN.

THE earth is weary waiting you, O people !
She yearns to hold you in her glad, green arms ;
Each morning as the sun lights up the valley
She tries to lure you with her hundred charms.
And sadly sighs, " Why do you stay away, Love,
Why do you timorous wear those self-forged
chains ?
Cannot the blackbird's magic music reach you,
Who calls, and calls, and calls in rose-starred
lanes ?
" The water-lily holds the sunbeam for you,
And wonders why you never come to look ;
The river glides or rushes to the ocean,
And under drooping willows runs the brook.
All things fulfil their mission, and are joyful,
Why do you stay so long, O Love of mine ?
Waiting for you, I deck myself in beauty,
Of sward and fern, gay flowers, and stately pine.
" O break your chains and come, for years are
fleeting !
These flowers I wear are for your absent eyes,
Soon it will be too late, dust will have filled, dear,
Your sight, and all in vain will shout the skies.
These waves of shade that wander o'er the corn-
fields,
These bursts of sun, and cool clouds scattering
rain,

Cornflowers, convolvulus with silver trumpets,
Birds singing mad, will come, O, ne'er again !

“ Others like to them may troop forth, for others—
But you may never see them, O come now !
Now, whilst the sun is shining on the meadows,
And let me send the hard lines from your brow.
A long, long rest would follow, I would give you
Sweet joy and beauty ere Life's gem be lost.
Your mother calls her truants to her bosom,
O come and claim her what may be the cost.

“ I pour, and pour, and pour my glorious treasures
That you may live and laugh, nor be a slave ;
They come and lay you dead before your time, dear,
And rend my breast to make your early grave.
Up like the sun, my boys, in morning's splendour,
Smiting aside the gloomy clouds' array :
Tell them the dreary hours of night are over,
You come to claim your mother and the day.”

A MARCHING TUNE.

⊙, THE beat of the drums,
And the sheen of the spears,
And red banners that toss like the sea,
Better far than the peace
That is fraught with deep death
To the wild rebel soul set in me ;

Better pour out the blood in a swift crimson flood,
 As to music we march to the grave,
 Than to feel day by day the slow drops ebb away
 From the chain-bitten heart of a slave.

O, to fight to the death,
 With a hope through the strife
 That the freedom we seek shall be ours,
 Better far than despair
 And the coward's weak words
 Trembling back from the front of the Powers.
 Better do, dare, and fail, than shake like a leaf
 pale
 In the breath of the wild autumn wind :
 Better death on the field with an honour bright
 shield
 Than the soft bed that coward souls find.

O, we leave hearth-stone warm
 For the rain-beaten roads,
 And our arrows are hung at our sides :
 Freedom dearer to us
 Than the home that we leave,
 Or the warm, clinging arms of the bride.
 For our children's fair eyes, like the blue of the
 skies,
 Foemen's gleaming with hate, chill as steel ;
 For the Mother-love touch that which smites
 over-much
 Till the life, stricken deep, earthward reels.

We have waited so long
 We can wait now no more,
 And we march forth, our Freedom to meet ;
 Keeping step to a tune
 That is brave as our hearts,
 Whilst the stones clatter loud to our feet.
 Can we fail when we fight for the sake of the light
 From the hearths where our cradles have stood ?
 For the fathers long dead, for the races ahead
 That shall spring up like flowers from our blood ?

GOOD HOPE.

⓪ WEARY hearts that languish for the light,
 And souls grown pale and shrunk 'neath
 slavish woes,
 Hurried so swiftly on to death's dark brink,
 Ye scarce have time to stay and pluck life's
 rose !
 Out of this cloud-like misery of yours,
 Beneath the shower of your fast-falling tears,
 The young May-buds of Freedom shall be born,
 To crown with deathless bloom the noble,
 unborn years.

I dreamt the thunder-drops did patter thick
 Through the old pear-tree boughs in storm last
 night,
 Yet there the merry birds will sit and sing,
 Sun-circled, on the bough grown full and white ;

And not one sigh which leaves your pallid lips,
One stifled sob which tyranny doth wring,
But soar, accusing angels, to the Heavens—
Bring near and yet more near fair Freedom's
balmy Spring.

LONDON.

DEARER than woods, bursting to new, bright
green,
Where whistling blackbirds shrill 'mid rose-
starred briars ;
Trails of white-petalled strawberries, April-washed,
Are these grey streets, vast crowds, and silvery
spires :
Wide lawns of fair loveliness, where Dawn
Trips, leaving diamond traces of her feet :
And bramble bushes hung with gossamers
Wake not within my heart a thrill so sweet
As when surrounded by this mighty throng,
These varying streams of great humanity,
Bearing their little toll of flowers or weeds
To the vast ocean of Eternity.
List to this murmur that doth rise and fall
Like surge of billows—richer than the notes
Of blackbird, or the cuckoo's madrigal,
Or rapturous joy of bursting linnethroats !
The lady's cultured accents, the hoarse call
Of violet-sellers help to swell that sound ;

The child's thin treble and the beggar's drone,
 Make up the song that floods the air around.
 Dear, busy hive of warm and throbbing life,
 O ! what are bees and birds, and chainless sea,
 Compared with men and women ? These do make
 The charm that draws one evermore to thee.

A CRYING CHILD IN LONDON.

A CHILD who cries ; a muffled, dreary tone,
 As if afraid to make too great a noise ;
 It may be that the grief was lightly drawn,
 Some trifling wrangle over stolen toys :
 Yet seemed it over-quiet for a child,
 The tears like drops of sap from some old tree
 Well slowly, and seem born with direst pain,
 Yet none did stay to wipe them tenderly.
 Flower-hawkers call in voices high and shrill
 Their violets that sweet fill the gazer's mind,
 With vistas of green woods, where willow-wrens
 Sing in the high tree-tops bent by the wind,
 And budding as light April rain is dried
 By smiles as sudden as her clouded brow :
 Whereas 'tis autumn, and the leaves fall fast,
 And London's ceaseless traffic rumbles low.
 A few half-turn, then hurry swift along ;
 London has bread to earn, and wealth to pour,
 Prayers to be muttered, lies to sell as truths,
 And like an ocean sends her mighty roar

Of sound throughout the world—she has not time
 To stay a weeping mite and dry its tears ;
 Like a tired jade she bustles ever on,
 Striving to mitigate her vast arrears.

FACES THROUGH THE MIST.

OUT of the wintry mist they stole,
 Weird faces framed by silvery gray ;
 Some by the street-lamp's yellow flame
 Gleamed sweet and fresh as flowers of May—
 With lovers walking by their side,
 Who came the closer that they know
 The veil that hid the moon and stars,
 And all sweet things, hid lovers, too.

Two went with light and eager steps,
 Their hearts beat warm with love and mirth,
 Thinking that if they willed it so
 They might drag heaven down to earth.
 Though millions failed yet would they win—
 So whispered they as on they passed ;
 It seemed as through the sea of mist
 A ship went by with fairy mast.

With silken sails where laughing winds
 Sang merry measures high and low,
 Laden with scents as sweet as those
 That went from Eden long ago.

My blessing in its flower-wreathed prow
 Lodged ; through the mist it passed once more
 And may it reach the visioned port,
 Nor rock its graceful timbers gore.

Some with bent heads and heavier tread,
 And cynic lips for long unkissed,
 Went by ; grey faces that some fay
 Might e'en have woven from the mist ;
 Who long have heaved from out their bark
 Hopes, dreams, caresses unfulfilled !
 Whose spices, sweets from Love's bright isle
 Into the sullen seas were spilled.

A whistling boy, his hands deep pushed
 In pockets knowing not a coin ;
 He chirps as blackbirds do in spring,
 Rich with the wealth none can purloin—
 The branches of his soul so green,
 So full of song in wild woods fair,
 He does not care one finger's snap
 For biting frost, mist-shrouded air.

The clear notes pass, as all things do,
 To silence, in the fog's grey cloak ;
 The shining pavements dimly show
 The amber lamp-stars. On they walk,
 The young, the old, the gay, the tired,
 The whistling boy with pursed red lips ;
 The lovers glad. All pass away—
 The mean, small boats—the stately ships !

A YEAR'S DREAM.

SINCE the Christmas bells last rung
We have woven many a dream,
Time, the tyrant harsh, has flung
Headlong in his hurrying stream.
Never care, O, never care !
We will weave them yet more true,
Brighter, sweeter, yet more rare—
Laughing, singing—I and you.

Since the carollers sang clear
Resolutions fine and pure,
As the snow-men we did rear
Long ago, could not endure.
What's the good of weeping then ?
As the sunshine melts the snow,
Resolutions, like white men,
Come to nothing : sing " Heigho ! "

Yet keep building, dreaming on ;
Better that than sleep—despair ;
And perchance, when we are gone,
Some slight fragment, sweet and fair,
Of our dreams and buildings long
May a little time remain ;
Better striving, laughter, song,
Than the sluggard's popped gain.

They who never weave a dream
 Never know the colours dear ;
 Always walking by life's stream
 With bent heads from year to year.
 (As the patient horses do,
 Pulling boats whilst others ride) ;
 Never see the sky of blue,
 Nor the grasses by the side.

These are they who make our chains
 Keep their strength. Oh, let us dream
 Of a world where Beauty reigns,
 And a nobler, wider stream—
 Till from all that men have built,
 Produce of their smiles and tears,
 All the blood that they have spilt,
 Men unborn make happier years.

A FRIEND LOST.

MY friend sailed out across the ocean tide,
 Who oft had sung, laughed, told us tales
 self-spun ;
 It seemed to us at first he almost died,
 Or as a cloud had covered up the sun.
 No more beside the waning fire we sat,
 A charmèd circle, hanging on his words,
 Or lightly ran to greet his loud rat-tat,
 A sudden silence froze sweet Friendship's chords.

But now a spirit friend is everywhere,
 Smiles on us from the room with fire glow red,
 Sits at the table, takes the vacant chair,
 And grows in stature higher by a head.
 Brings distant cities near, and heaving seas,
 Speeds o'er the Atlantic waves, sun, cloud, and
 breeze.

BEYOND.

BEYOND ! Let us not question, thou and I,
 About the world that in such mist doth lie,
 The searches of the greatest and most wise
 Have found it not—turn we our longing eyes
 Back unto this—illumed through sorrow's tears
 With hope's fresh sunbeams ; tear-drops for the
 years
 That we have squandered in our searchings vain—
 Smiles,—that we find our long-lost heaven again !

Beyond ! beyond ! the hiding mist hangs low
 Across the sea. Our dear ones long ago
 Set out from us and braved the blustering gale ;
 Awhile we stood and watched their glimmering
 sail
 Fade into distance—for their joyful shout
 We waited—waited ! Then came ache of doubt,
 For silence, heavy as a frozen sea,
 Returned to greet us from Eternity.

So that we only feel the hands we clasp
 May melt like sun-warmed snow-drifts from our
 grasp ;
 And clasp them tighter—harsh words no more fling
 Against the weaker ones. Will they not bring
 Dark floods of sorrow when they sail beyond
 The reach of all our sweetest words and fond ?
 We only strive to bring the irised glow
 Of Paradise into this world we know.

And couchèd on the moorland's purple breast
 Whilst overhead the lapwing guards her nest
 With shrilly call—and blue hills gently rise
 Around us—seeming touch the leaning skies,
 Which like faint azure curtains o'er are drawn,
 Or watch the glorious coming of the dawn,
 We smile to think of all our ache and fear
 And search for heaven—which waiteth for us here.

OUR HOUSEHOLD GODS.

A STRANGELY human look our gods take on
 From living with us through the changeful
 years :

We gaze, and see no lifeless soulless things,
 But spirits, bearing prints of smiles and tears.
 The kettle, singing gaily on the hob,
 Has taken on twice o'er a sombre note—
 As in the darkened house sat funeral guests
 We heard the anguish hissing in its throat.

And it has whistled blithe on frosty nights
Shouting impatiently, "I wait! I wait!"
When we have laughed with sweet friends round
the fire,
Forgetting that the hour was growing late.
This creaking chair would scarce a florin bring,
To much light laughter knocked down at a sale;
I think of dear ones who have rested there—
And swear 'tis priceless, lips unsteady, pale.

The terraced houses with their windows high,
Their corniced ceilings, oak stairs, frescoed halls,
Would leave my heart all homesick for the glint
Of firelight in dark nooks and o'er loved walls.
The hearth-stone shrine where we have gathered
close
When bleak winds wailed and raved across the
moor—
Where those behind now talk of those away
As of past riches, men forlorn and poor.

To thee, the stranger, sitting for a space
Within my house, these god-souls will not speak;
Unconscious of the spirits hidden there,
And smiling as the quaint old chair doth creak;
Thou seest no shadows entering at the door,
No songs call to thee from this fire of mine—
But sit in thine own house, calm, still, at eve,
And thine own gods will make thy heart a shrine.

THE HOME VOICE.

A WHISPERING voice that comes when
shadows fall,

And evening winds are shivering spectral pines ;
When mothers by the mill-stream send the cry

That calls to where the bed-time lantern shines.

All through the day I stay my listening ears,

But when the mothers call their children home,
Sending their voices 'cross the darkening stream,
I hear that song o'er leagues of whitening foam.

Not mountains clothed with pines 'gainst bluest
skies—

With snowy hollow silent to the brim,
Nor forest aisles of splendid gloom and glow

Wherein the mating birds chant joyous hymn—

Not all the things of new and sweet and strange,

Wherewith heaped full my day heart loves to
roam,

Can mute my ears against that evening cry

When mothers call, " 'Tis bed-time ! Come ye
home ! "

FORGOTTEN DAYS.

WHENCE come these memories telling me
Of glorious lives I've lived before ?

Whence float those pictures of strange lands,

And sound of sea from unseen shore ?

The salt spray flying 'gainst my cheek
Blown from a laughing, dimpling creek,
Wakes tears that come I know not why
If not for sea-years drifted by.

The sun who sets 'midst gorgeous flakes
Of purples deep, and amber glows,
With faded greens and coolest greys,
And spurts as red as reddest rose,
It seems to me has shed its rays
Upon me in forgotten days
When, maybe, curfews slowly tolled,
And earth was centuries less old.

These friends that take me by the hand
Come to me with familiar grace ;
It sometimes seems to me I've met
Them in the past : each frank, free face
Brings me such pleasure that I know
I must have loved them long ago—
Have looked deep down into their eyes,
And with them watched the great sun rise.

IMMORTALITY.

IN a hundred years or more Spring will come with
her garlands of bloom,
And her new lovers walk in the sun when her old
lovers rest in the tomb ;

46 Songs of a Factory Girl.

Whilst for us golden rains drip unheard and the
 warm sunlight burns all unseen,
And the lilac spray waves in the wind, and the
 wren takes her mate in the green ;
And we sleep well and long underground, and have
 done with the laughter and tears,
Who are building to-day the fair world that shall
 be in a hundred years.

In a hundred years or more they will sing sweeter
 songs than we know,
And the rain that is falling on us will have helped
 their red roses to grow ;
And we never may hark to the gladness that
 throbs through the chaos of pain,
That we bore unto them through the darkness,
 the raging of wind and of rain ,
But the music shall echo for all time that grew
 from our striving and tears,
And shall ring down the ages with joy unto men
 in a hundred years.

The best thoughts we are thinking to-day shall be
 living and active and strong,
When we sleep at the end of the fight, caring not
 for the war-whoop or song,
And it matters far more than we know that we
 keep our hearts steadfast and brave,
For the strength that they held shall walk forth
 when they mix with the dust of the grave,

And immortal, and lovely, and young shall our
dream live unclouded by tears,
When we take the long rest that is sweet after toil
in a hundred years.

LOOKING BACK.

WHEN we look back after the battle-smoke
Has cleared away, oft where we think we
lost,

We shall behold that it was victory,
Knowing the banners which to earth were tossed
Shall stream again before the merry wind
With brave hearts following on for evermore—
That men fail only when they die for naught,
Not when they win one step towards the shore.

When we look back, fast nearing the long rest—
The bed that waits to hold each weary limb—
What do you think the sweetest thing will be
To lie remembering when the eyes grow dim ?
Not that we hoarded up excess of wealth,
Nor e'en of lovely places where we roved,
But that through all the tricks of chance and time,
From starting on the path, we have been loved.

'Twill not be hard to follow where they went ;
The nearing wave may take us where it list,
So that it brings us nearer to the hands
We held awhile in ours—the lips we kissed :

As for the world we leave, it will go on—

For lovers and the ones beloved a heaven !

And we have done our duty well if we

Ourselves and those who follow us have given.

We cannot now disparage this dear world,

Its stars and sun-sheen, flowers, fern-fronds
and briars,

Because we follow outward with the tide

To lands unknown ; its yearnings, mad desires,

Its music, discords, tears, and laughter light

Were sweet to us and bind us even yet ;

A fair brave life ! One glistening hour of it

Was worth ten years with grief-brine grey and
wet !

FAITH.

MOST earnestly and truly I believe

The human heart is beautiful and good :

Though poisonous weeds upgrow within its clefts

As nightshade grows within the verdant wood.

There are soft streams that flow with gentle sound,

And pearly sprays of blossom—and the grove

Is flooded with the music of sweet birds—

So o'er its dark emotions triumphs love.

Let me keep clear unto the end of life

My faith in sweet humanity's fair flower ;

Old age, that sits with all its glamour gone,

Cynical, cold, and infidel and sour

Is something to be shrunk from, but the light
Of youth's departed glory hovers still
About the one who keeps through winter's rime,
The thought that hearts are good and seldom ill.
Yet will I trust, for better 'tis to fall
Through trusting much than trusting not at all.

POSSESSION.

THERE bloomed by my cottage door
A rose with a heart scented sweet
O so lovely and fair, that I plucked it one day ;
Laid it over my own heart's quick beat.
In a moment its petals were shed,
Just a tiny white mound at my feet.

There flew through my casement low
A linnet who richly could sing ;
Sang so thrillingly sweet I could not let it go,
But must cage it, the glad, pretty thing,
But it died in the cage I had made,
Not a note to my chamber would bring.

There came to my lonely soul
A friend I had waited for long ;
And the deep chilly silence lay stricken and dead,
Pierced to death by our love and our song.
And I thought on the bird and the flower,
And my soul in its knowledge grew strong.

Go out when thou wilt, O friend—

Sing thy song, roam the world glad and free ;
 By the holding I lose, by the giving I gain,
 And the gods cannot take thee from me ;
 For a song and a scent on the wind
 Shall drift in through the doorway from thee.

LIFE.

⓪, LIFE was made for joy, not woe—

Whatever saints may say ;
 We were not meant, with heads bent low,
 To walk a briary way.
 'Twas man transposed to minor strain
 Life's page of love and laughter ;
 Someday we'll change it back again,
 Whate'er may follow after.

O, Life was made for love, not hate—

Whatever warriors say ;
 And Love will rule or soon or late,
 With Freedom's fragrant May.
 Life's page was meant for joy's rich bloom,
 For sunlight, roses, laughter—
 Between the cradle and the tomb,
 Whate'er may follow after.

FREEDOM.

FREEDOM comes slowly, but remember she
Must beg from door to door, a barefoot
maid ;

No high-born dome in gilded car she rides.

Full oft beneath the stars her bed is made,
And men repulse her often. Yet her eyes
Rain drops of purest pity ; as for hate,
It finds no entrance to her noble heart,
And she will bless the toiler soon or late.

The thorns along the path of centuries
Have deeply scarred her delicate brown feet ;
Her gown is torn by many a thicket wild
Which she has wandered through ; her broad
brow sweet
Is crowned by fadeless roses lovers placed
To cheer her heart as on her way she came ;
Her flesh oft faints beside the roadside hard.
Her spirit cannot die—'tis made of flame.

A FUTURE CRADLE SONG.

CHILD of love and joy and hope,
Sleep awhile, for nightfall comes ;
All the birds are fast asleep,
In their leafy, whispering homes.

Sleep, that thou mayst grow full strong
 For the work that is delight,
 For the glory of the noon,
 For the peace and charm of night.
 For the tossing of the sea,
 Mountain passes darkly wild—
 All the world here waits for thee,
 Sleep, grow strong, our little child.
 Face of sun, and moon and stars,
 Moorlands ragged, mountain stairs,
 Morning mists and sunset's pomps,
 Love of woman, noble cares—
 Shall be thine when thou art strong,
 Sleep, till day brings light and song.

IN FARNHAM PARK.

(DEDICATED TO MISS GERTRUDE ROBERTSON.)

IF suddenly should burst upon the sight
 Through droopings of these boughs so coolly
 green
 Diana with white horn—with sweet delight
 Without surprise, the eye would view the scene ;
 For here are spaces wide, with dim oak shade,
 As fair as those where she so often strayed.

The sound of the world's rush is scarcely heard—
 Anon the ear may catch the mellow bell,

Chiming through full-leaved bowers—or call of
bird—

Notes that but deeper make the aërial spell :
And when the sun makes golden ways, the grass
Seems waiting for the nymphs that used to pass,

In days of old, when man had time to dream,
And life moved with a nobler pulse, if slow ;
And there were fairies hid in every stream
That laved the pulpy rushes—long ago !
Alas ! dear days, and will ye not return ?
Swift turning, hot and tired, the world doth yearn.

Such drooping of full branches that appear
Just touched by Autumn's finger, and turned
pale,
A few, for fear of all their doom, shown clear,
To whirl and dance in death upon the gale !
Such caw of rooks and rustling leaves of trees
Conspiring with the early morning breeze.

And blue, blue shadows changing like the sea,
Where now and then a playful sunbeam flits
Like a gold sail, whilst swooping mournfully
To earth a faded leaf all lonesome sits ;
Again the silvery bell calls through the green,
And so farewell unto the sylvan scene.

FAILURE.

THE arrows that he shot fell back to earth,
 The seed he scattered fell, yet bore no
 flowers ;

Men made his name a little butt for mirth,
 Till even Hope fled from the ruined bowers :
 Yet, hopeless of success, he still fought on
 Till day's bright reign was o'er and life was done.

He looked along the grey and flinty way,
 Roseless and lightened with no joyous beam ;
 He saw again the youth so brave and gay,
 Who brightened all things with his radiant
 dream--

I fought, he said, and not one lie fell slain ;
 I sowed--no flower sprang up 'neath sun and rain.

Some with their laugh won more than all my tears ;
 They danced along the path I climbed so slow,
 And reaped the harvest in the early years,
 And stood on high tops near the sun's warm
 glow--

Yet though I won it not with labours long,
 My soul knows that it well deserved the song.

I envy not the laurel--it is theirs :
 Those born 'neath happier stars, close to their
 time ;

Envy has touched me not, if gaunt despairs,
 Nor cast upon my heart its bittering rime.

If I won not, 'twas for no sluggard sleep,
Nor for the lack of true courageous leap.

So keep your laurels—write my name with those
Who nobly failed where some ignobly won :
Perchance some glory round about them glows
That takes its splendour from the tireless sun.
Write thus : He fought from daylight to the dark,
And every arrow bounded from its mark.

And yet this rest will be a warrior's rest
As hardly earned as those who won the field ;
For from the star-wane to the reddening west
The heart that conquered not would never yield.
Write failure if you will. Those who fight on
When hope has flown are close to Victory's sun.

AFTERWORD.

I HAVE given my best, I have gathered each
thought
From my heart's changing garden, and to you have
brought ;
You may praise, you may scorn, but my spirit has
rest
In the arms of this thought—" I have given my
best."

I have given my best. Though the poor flowers I
bring
Be not lilies nor roses, but just such as spring
In the cool, quiet hedgerow, to catch the tired eye
Of the labourer going homewards 'neath even's
grey sky :
He may crush with his heel, he may warm with his
breast—
It is all one to me—I have given my best.

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